



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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For Immediate Release

Wednesday, Oct. 29, 2003

Grassley, Baucus Emphasize Need to Fill Key Inspector General Post

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, and Sen. Max Baucus, ranking member, today urged the White House to nominate a candidate for inspector general at the Health and Human Services Department. The senators also encouraged the White House to prepare for the departure of the Social Security Administration inspector general early next year.

The text of the senators' letter to the White House follows.

October 29, 2003

Via mail and telefax (202) 456-1907

Mr. Andrew H. Card Jr.
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Card:

The purpose of this letter is to express our concern that an Inspector General (IG) has not yet been nominated for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). With the Congress poised to recess within the next few weeks, we would hope that a nomination could be offered in the very near future so that the Senate could act to confirm a nominee immediately or, if necessary, very shortly upon its return in January. The position of HHS IG is critical to maintaining integrity and accountability at HHS.

The former HHS IG announced her resignation almost eight months ago. That resignation came near the close of an investigation regarding, among other things, the operation and management of the OIG. Since the former IG stepped down, Dara Corrigan has acted in the capacity of Principal Deputy IG.

The concept of the IG was codified in 1978. Inspectors General are mandated to deter,

investigate and prosecute fraud, waste and abuse in government programs. In addition, IGs are charged with insuring the efficient, effective and economical operation of the agency. They fulfill these mandates through the use of audits, evaluations and investigations. They operate as nonpartisan, independent offices and now exist in nearly all government departments.

We cannot express adequately the importance of insuring that an IG is nominated and confirmed promptly for the Department of Health and Human Services. This Department expends hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars every year, and it is targeted by both individual and corporate fraudsters who bilk the system to the detriment of each and every American. Without a permanent IG, imbued with the authority and stature that derives from Senate confirmation, the office will be unable to set a new and permanent course for its future activities and operations.

Finally, we were recently advised that the IG at the Social Security Administration (SSA) intends to retire on or about March 5, 2004. We encourage the Administration to embark on its search for a new SSA IG quickly in the hope of ensuring continuity of operations in that crucial agency, as well.

Thank you in advance for your attention to these very important matters.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley
Chairman

Max Baucus
Ranking Member